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DRAFT**Dear Mr. Walsh:**

I have your recent letter concerning Francis Gary Powers and whether the United States Government contracts with certain individuals to commit suicide if threatened with imminent capture by an "unfriendly government."

The Senate Armed Services Committee went into this case quite thoroughly in 1962. As you may recall, after Mr. Powers was released by the Soviet Union, a board of inquiry was convened to determine if Mr. Powers complied with the terms of his employment and his obligation as an American.

Among other questions, the inquiry went into the question of why the destruct mechanism had not been actuated by Mr. Powers before he bailed out of the U-2 airplane. The destruct mechanism was installed to prevent highly sensitive technical equipment from falling into "unfriendly hands." It was to be used to destroy this equipment and not Mr. Powers' life.

The issue of suicide was raised in connection with the poison needle that Mr. Powers had in his possession at the time of his capture. As brought out in the Senate hearing, he was not under instructions to commit suicide. The poison needle was to be used only if he were subjected

to torture or other circumstances which, in his discretion, warranted the taking of his own life. It was his option whether he took the needle along with him on the mission.

The instructions under which Mr. Powers operated were that he should surrender without resistance and cooperate with his captors. He was perfectly free to tell the truth about his mission with the exception of certain specifications of the aircraft. The board found that Mr. Powers lived up to the terms of his employment and instructions in connection with his mission.

I am sending you a copy of the Senate hearings on the Powers' case, which I think you might be interested in reading. I hope this letter has proved responsive to your inquiry; and if there is anything else I can do on this matter, please feel free to call upon me.